

Sports for Climate Action

Bigger than the Game Initiative

Putting Sports Fans at the Heart of Climate Action

Introduction

In the face of the climate crisis, the sports world stands as a formidable ally. The potential of sport to transcend borders and reach people in all parts of the world makes it a unique cultural entity for mobilising a groundswell of climate action. The "Bigger than the Game" initiative, developed for the UNFCCC Sports for Climate Action Framework, aligns the global influence of sports with fan-led planning and development, transforming sports entities into catalysts for climate action. This manual outlines the approach, leveraging the sports community's passion to mobilise fans, athletes, and organisations towards a sustainable future.

Our Cultural Footprint: Playing to Our Strengths

While aligning with the Paris Agreement through emission reductions is vital for sports organisations, their most transformative potential in combating climate change lies in leveraging their extensive cultural footprint. By empowering fans to act, sports organisations can amplify their impact far beyond the operational aspects of sports. This begins with actively listening to fans, understanding their values and concerns, and then designing accessible solutions that enable fans to contribute meaningfully to climate action.

The heart of this initiative lies in a three-phase plan aimed at transforming fans from spectators to active participants in climate action. Through listening to the needs and priorities of the people who make up our sporting community, and designing climate actions that help to address those needs and priorities, the strategy aims to foster a robust movement of fan engagement, transcending the confines of sports to contribute widespread transformative action.

Starting Point: Defining the Fans

Among the diverse signatories of the UNFCCC Sports for Climate Action Framework, "Fans" can be defined in many ways, including the sport's participants, media consumers, and community members engaged in various forms of sports interaction. As such, the first step must identify their primary audience, recognising whether it's club supporters, active players, or a dedicated readership that forms their largest cultural footprint. This nuanced understanding of "Fans" is crucial for tailoring climate action initiatives that resonate with the specific groups each organisation aims to mobilise, ensuring the success of the "Bigger than the Game" strategy.

The Three-Phase Plan

The "Bigger than the Game" initiative unfolds through a strategic three-phase plan, designed to progressively deepen the sports world's commitment to environmental sustainability. In Phase One, the **Foundational Phase**, the focus is on laying the groundwork for fan-led action by building internal capacities, engaging with fans to gauge their perspectives on climate action, and making a public commitment to fan-led efforts. Phase Two, the **Progression Phase**, is characterised by the implementation and refinement of fan-led initiatives, with an emphasis on

inclusivity, diversity, and leveraging the influence of sports to magnify the reach and impact of these initiatives. The final phase, the **Transformation Phase**, is dedicated to assessing the impact of these efforts, adapting strategies based on feedback, and setting ambitious, achievable long-term goals for the future, grounded in ongoing fan participation and leadership.

Phase 1: Foundational Phase

Actions:

- a. **Engage with Fans:** Initiate conversations to understand their views on climate action.
- b. **Internal Capacity Building:** Work with relevant staff members to enhance focus on fan's challenges in accessing climate action.
- c. **Public Commitment:** Make a formal declaration to involve fans in climate initiatives.
- d. **Develop the Kick-Off Plan:** Outline strategies for fan engagement and climate awareness, tailored to the organisation's context.
- e. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Build relationships with environmental groups, NGOs, and government bodies for collaborative action.

Deliverable:

Kick-off plan: The kick off plan will include an innovation, co-created with fans, which focuses on using climate action to address their needs and priorities.

Phase 2: Progression Phase

- **Prototype Fan-Led Initiatives:** Trial and implement initiatives that align with environmental and social objectives.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Ensure initiatives are inclusive and representative of the entire community.
- **Leverage Influencers:** Use the platform of athletes and sports personalities to extend the reach of initiatives.

Deliverable:

First Bigger than the Game Report: This report will analyse the success of the prototype initiative and identify opportunities.

Phase 3: Transformation Phase

- **Assess Impact:** Conduct evaluations to understand the effectiveness of initiatives and gather fan feedback.
- **Adapt and Plan:** Use feedback to adapt initiatives and set clear, long-term goals for future climate action.
- **Long-Term Strategy Submission:** Outline sustained commitment to fan-led action in the "Long-Term Strategy" including a continuous listening process, a mechanism to regularly gather fan insights on climate action.

Transformation Deliverable:

Second Bigger than the Game Report: This report details the continuous listening process and long-term strategy that the Sports for Climate Action Signatory will adopt.

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Step 1: Defining the Fan-Base

This form is designed to assist Sports for Climate Action signatories in identifying and understanding their primary audience, their fans, for targeted climate empowerment initiatives.

Organisation Information:

Name of Organisation:

Category of Organisation: (Please select one)

- ☐ Professional and High-Profile Entities
- ☐ Community and Developmental Organisations
- ☐ Media and Communication
- ☐ Place-based Sports Entities & Major Sports Events
- ☐ Governing Bodies

How Connected Is Your Primary Audience with Your Organisation?

Please check the box that best describes the nature and depth of your primary audience's connection with your organisation.

- ☐ Highly Engaged Fans or Members
Our fans are deeply invested in watching our games and events, showing high emotional and financial commitment.
- ☐ Active Participants
Our audience is actively involved in playing the sport or participating in related activities, forming a direct connection with the sport itself.
- ☐ Community Advocates
Our fans are more engaged in community and grassroots level activities, showing a strong connection to local initiatives and values.
- ☐ Content Consumers
Our primary audience primarily engages with us through media consumption, including broadcasts, publications, and digital content.
- ☐ Venue Visitors
Fans are most connected through their physical presence and experiences at our venues or events, participating in the live sports environment.
- ☐ Policy Influenced
The connection is more indirect, with fans being influenced by the policies, standards, and practices we set at a governing level.

What is the nature of the influence you hold over your Primary Audience?

Evaluate the level of influence your organisation has on its primary audience. Check the statement that best describes this influence:

- ☐ Highly Influential
Our organisation significantly shapes fan behaviours, opinions, and lifestyle choices beyond sports.
- ☐ Moderately Influential
We have a notable impact on our fans, influencing their engagement with sports and related activities.
- ☐ Somewhat Influential
Our influence is present but limited to specific areas such as game attendance or merchandise purchases.
- ☐ Minimally Influential
Our impact on fans is minimal, with fans engaging with our organisation on a casual or occasional basis.
- ☐ Indirectly Influential: Our influence is more indirect, possibly through policies, community initiatives, or educational programs rather than direct fan engagement.

What are the characteristics of you Primary Audience?

Please select the characteristics that best describe your primary audience. Choose all that apply:

Age Group:

- ☐ All age groups
- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 and over

Values:

- ☐ Community Involvement
- ☐ Personal Achievement
- ☐ Environmental Stewardship
- ☐ Innovation and Technology
- ☐ Tradition and History
- ☐ Diversity and Inclusion

Engagement Level:

- ☐ Highly Engaged (actively participates in events, follows closely)
- ☐ Moderately Engaged (occasional participation or follow-up)

- ☐ Passively Engaged (limited interaction)

Geographical Location:

- ☐ Local (same city/region as the organisation)
☐ National (within the same country)
☐ International (across borders)

Engagement Channels:

Select the primary ways in which your organisation engages with its audience. Choose all that apply.

- ☐ Social Media Platforms: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, etc.
☐ Live Events: Games, matches, tournaments, and other live sporting events.
☐ Broadcast Media: Television, radio, and live streaming services.
☐ Print Media: Newspapers, magazines, and newsletters.
☐ Digital Content: Website, blogs, podcasts, and email newsletters.
☐ Community Programs: Local initiatives, workshops, and meet-ups.
☐ Merchandising: Sports apparel, equipment, and other branded merchandise.
☐ Athlete Appearances: Meet-and-greets, autograph signings, and public appearances.
☐ Educational Programs: Clinics, seminars, and training sessions.
☐ Fan Clubs/Groups: Official and unofficial fan clubs and online forums.
☐ Sponsorship Activations: Events, campaigns, and promotions with sponsors.
☐ Virtual Events: Webinars, virtual meets, and online fan engagement activities.

Additional Insights:

Share any additional insights or observations that could help in understanding and mobilising your fan base for climate action.

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Step 2: Guidance on Listening to the Fans

Introduction

Understanding your fans' needs and priorities is the first step towards designing an effective and meaningful climate engagement program. This guidance sheet explores various methods to gather insights, ensuring that your organisation can create initiatives that resonate with your audience and encourage active participation in climate action.

Engagement Options

1. Surveys and Questionnaires

Distribute digital or paper surveys during events, via email, or on social media platforms to collect detailed feedback. Focus questions on understanding fans' daily challenges, interests, and the role sports play in their lives.

2. Social Media Engagement

Utilise polls and open-ended questions on platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to gather informal feedback. Analyse comments and discussions on your posts to gauge fan sentiments and topics of interest.

3. Fan Forums and Focus Groups

Organise virtual or in-person focus group sessions with a diverse group of fans to discuss their views and ideas in-depth. Establish fan forums on your website or social media platforms to facilitate ongoing discussions.

4. Interviews

Conduct one-on-one interviews with fans from various demographics to understand their personal experiences and viewpoints. Consider including questions about how they integrate sustainability into their sports fandom.

5. Fan Clubs and Community Meetings

Engage with official and unofficial fan clubs to gather collective feedback. Attend community meetings or events where fans are likely to gather.

6. Observational Studies

Observe fan behaviours and engagement during games, events, and in online communities. Take note of fan-initiated sustainability practices or discussions around climate action.

7. Feedback Boxes

Set up physical or digital feedback boxes for fans to share their thoughts anonymously. Encourage feedback on how they feel the sport or organisation can contribute to broader societal issues, including climate change.

Looking for advice

Seeking assistance in understanding the social and economic contexts of your primary audience is crucial for designing effective surveys and engagement strategies. While the UNFCCC is readily available to offer guidance and support, partnering with local NGOs or universities can provide deeper insights into the specific challenges and priorities of your fan base. These organisations possess valuable knowledge and expertise in issues of relevance, making them ideal resources for tailoring your initiatives to address the nuanced needs of your audience. Engaging with these entities not only enriches your understanding but also fosters collaborations that can enhance the relevance and impact of your climate action programs.

Adapting the Listening Phase for Indirect Connections

For organisations with more indirect connections to their fans, such as media organisations and governing bodies, the Listening phase of engaging fans for climate action may require alternative approaches. Unlike direct fan engagement typical of clubs or teams, these entities influence fans primarily through media content, broadcasts, and the policies or standards they establish. Consequently, understanding what resonates with their primary audience might involve:

Exploring Alternative Engagement Channels: Media organisations can leverage their content platforms to gauge audience interest and sentiment towards climate issues. This might include special segments on environmental sustainability in sports, audience polls on climate-related topics, or interactive digital content that invites audience participation.

Collaboration with Affiliated Organisations: Governing bodies and media entities can encourage or require organisations under their umbrella to engage in fan listening activities. Gathering insights from these organisations can provide a broader view of fan attitudes and needs regarding climate action across the sports community.

Mandating Listening Processes: Governing bodies have the unique position of setting policies that shape the sports sector's approach to climate action. Implementing policies that mandate fan engagement and co-design processes in climate initiatives can ensure that a wide range of sports entities incorporate fan insights into their sustainability strategies.

Utilising Research and Studies: Conducting or commissioning research studies to explore the intersection of sports, media consumption, and environmental attitudes can offer deep insights into the audience's values and expectations. This data can inform the development of targeted climate action initiatives that resonate with the broader fan base.

Partnerships for Insight Gathering: Building partnerships with academic institutions, environmental NGOs, and community organisations can facilitate a deeper understanding of the socio-economic and environmental contexts influencing fans. These collaborations can also enhance the credibility and reach of climate initiatives.

Designing a Survey

When designing a survey to understand your fans better, consider the following:

- **Keep it Concise:** Aim for short, focused surveys to respect fans' time and increase completion rates.
- **Demographic Questions:** Gather basic demographic information to identify trends and differences among various fan segments.
- **Language and Tone:** Use language that is inclusive and accessible to all fans, avoiding technical jargon.
- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Assure respondents that their responses are anonymous and will be used solely for improving fan engagement and initiatives.
- **Incentivisation:** Offer incentives such as discounts, merchandise, or the chance to win tickets to encourage participation.

The design of the Bigger than the Game initiative, with its focus on the needs and priorities of fans, differentiates it from traditional climate or sustainability initiatives. This approach requires some additional considerations when creating any survey or engagement process:

- **Allowing the Primary Audience to Inform the Survey:** The nature of your primary audience plays a crucial role in shaping your survey. Factors like location, age, or social class influence question relevance. For instance, questions for a city-centric audience might focus on local issues, while a diverse age group demands a different approach to ensure questions resonate. Tailoring surveys to your audience's characteristics ensures that their lived experiences inform meaningful climate initiatives.
- **Centring the Lived Experience of the Primary Audience:** When designing surveys for the Bigger than the Game initiative, the focus should extend beyond traditional environmental or behavioural queries to encompass the broader challenges faced by your audience, whether social, economic, or environmental. Understanding these core needs and priorities enables the creation of climate interventions that are both impactful and aligned with your audience's concerns, deepening their engagement and commitment to sustainability.

Survey Categories

In designing people-centred climate action, Sports for Climate Action Signatories look to understand multiple facets of lived experience of their Primary Audience. The categories below are broken up into General, Localised and Distributed – to align with different contexts for Sports for Climate Action Signatories.

General Questions

- **Demographics:** Gathering demographic information such as age, gender, socio-economic status, and cultural background can help tailor climate initiatives to the diverse needs and preferences of the fan base, ensuring inclusivity and effectiveness in engagement strategies.
- **Emotional Connection and Engagement Patterns:** Understanding feelings of belonging or affinity towards the sports entity or community as well as frequency

and modes of engagement help to build expectations around engagement with climate initiatives.

- **Geographical Location:** Understanding where fans live relative to the sports venue to gauge place-based needs and opportunities.
- **Communication Preferences:** Preferred channels and methods for receiving information about climate action and environmental rights from the sports entity.

Localised Audience

- **Community Connection:** Assessing the sense of belonging and influence in local decision-making can help understand how to engage fans more deeply in community-based climate initiatives.
- **Housing and Energy:** Exploring fans' housing situations, energy difficulties, and potential for energy efficiency upgrades can reveal key areas for climate action.
- **Food Habits:** Exploring fans' access to affordable local food, their food consumption habits, and interest in sustainable food options can lead to initiatives promoting food sustainability and reducing food-related emissions.
- **Transportation Habits:** Insights into how fans utilise modes of transport can highlight sustainable transport opportunities or barriers.
- **Local Environment:** Gauging fans' access to and satisfaction with local green spaces, as well as the presence of environmental nuisances (noise, water quality, littering, air pollution), can inform initiatives to improve community environments.

Distributed Audience

- **Economic Challenges:** Understanding your primary audience's difficulties in managing energy bills or the financial accessibility of sustainable living choices can help to target meaningful interventions that maximise climate impacts while improving lives.
- **Access to Environmental Information and Justice:** Understanding fans' awareness and accessibility to information and resources for tackling environmental issues can guide educational and support efforts.
- **Perceptions of Environmental Education:** Understanding fans exposure to, and their perspective on environmental education or awareness initiatives could help to design more inclusive and effective campaigns.
- **Public Participation:** Insights into how fans perceive their ability to influence environmental decisions and their preferred avenues for taking action can enhance public engagement strategies.

Example Survey Questions

The example survey questions provided below serve as indicative prompts designed to inspire Sports for Climate Action signatories in crafting their unique surveys. It's essential to tailor these questions to fit the specific context and the characteristics of your Primary Audience, ensuring they are relevant and resonate with the group you aim to engage. While open-ended questions can provide rich, qualitative insights, a focus on multiple choice questions can significantly streamline the analysis process, making it easier to identify trends, preferences, and areas of concern among your audience.

General Questions

Demographics

- What age are you?
- Which of the following best describes your current employment status: employed, self-employed, unemployed, student, retired?
- Within which income range does your household fall?

Emotional Connection and Engagement Patterns:

- How strongly do you feel a sense of belonging to [Organisation/Club Name]?
- How often do you engage with [Organisation/Club] through various channels (attending games, social media, merchandise purchases)?
- What motivates your support or engagement with [Organisation/Club]?

Communication Preferences:

- Through which channel do you prefer to receive news and updates from [Organisation/Club] (Email, SMS, social media, official website, newsletter)?
- How often would you like to receive communications from [Organisation/Club]?
- What type of content from [Organisation/Club] do you find most engaging or valuable?

Localised Questions

Community Connection:

- How connected do you feel to your local community?
- How often do you participate in local events or initiatives hosted by [Organisation/Club]?
- In what ways do you think [Organisation/Club] could strengthen its involvement in the local community?

Housing and Energy:

- Are there common energy concerns in your community, such as high bills or inefficient heating systems?
- Would you be interested in community-based projects focused on improving home energy efficiency, like group insulation upgrades?
- How aware are you of energy-saving measures or renewable energy options for your home?

Food Habits:

- How accessible are local and sustainable food options in your area?
- Would you support a [Organisation/Club]-initiated program that promotes local food sourcing or urban gardening?
- How important is the sustainability of your food choices to you?

Transportation Habits:

- What are the primary modes of transportation you use?
- Would you consider shifting to more sustainable transport options (e.g., public transport, biking) if possible?
- Are there specific barriers that prevent you from choosing more sustainable transportation options?

Local Environment:

- What are the most pressing environmental concerns in your local area (e.g., pollution, lack of green spaces)?
- How would you rate the availability and quality of green spaces in your community?
- Would you participate in a [Organisation/Club]-led initiative aimed at improving local environmental conditions (e.g., tree planting, clean-up drives)?

Distributed Audience

Economic Challenges:

- How often do economic concerns, like energy costs, affect your life on a day-to-day basis?
- Is [Climate Solution – e.g. Retrofitting] an affordable climate action for you?
- Are there economic barriers that hinder your ability to adopt sustainable lifestyles or technologies?

Access to Environmental Information and Justice:

- How informed do you feel about environmental issues and sustainable practices within the context of sports and your community?
- Would a [Organisation/Club]-led informational campaign on your environmental rights be of interest to you?
- What type of environmental information or support do you feel is lacking but necessary in your community?

Perceptions of Environmental Education:

- Have you engaged with any environmental education materials or programs?
- What topics or areas of environmental education are you most interested in learning more about?
- How effective do you think sports organisations are in raising awareness about climate change and sustainability?

Public Participation:

- Do you feel there are enough opportunities for you to engage in environmental decision-making or sustainability initiatives within your community?
- What platforms or methods would you prefer for participating in environmental discussions or actions?
- Do you feel like your concerns are listened to and acted in local decision making?

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Step 3: Kick-Off Plan

Organisation Information:

Name of Organisation:

Category of Organisation: (Please select one)

- ☐ Professional and High-Profile Entities
- ☐ Community and Developmental Organisations
- ☐ Media and Communication
- ☐ Place-based Sports Entities & Major Sports Events
- ☐ Governing Bodies

Section 1 - Bigger than the Game – Intervention Details:

Initiative Name:

Provide the name of the climate action initiative to be trailed.

Social Benefit:

- ☐ Environmental Education
- ☐ Green Space
- ☐ Improved Mobility
- ☐ Access to Energy
- ☐ Access to Information
- ☐ Access to Justice
- ☐ Enhanced Wellbeing
- ☐ Enhanced Urban Environment
- ☐ Advocacy Support
- ☐ Social Inclusion
- ☐ Other (Please Specify)

Briefly describe the primary objective of the initiative in terms of community benefit.

Climate Action Benefit:

- ☐ Emissions Reduction

- ☐ Enhanced Adaptation Capacity

Briefly describe how the initiative contributes to climate action.

Timeline:

Briefly outline the timeline this intervention will follow.

Fan Engagement Insights:

Provide a summary of the key findings from your engagement with fans that informed this initiative.

Section 2 - Internal Capacity Building:

Activities Undertaken:

List the main activities your organisation has undertaken to build internal capacity for fan-centred climate action.

- ☐ Staff Workshops for design of Fan Engagement or Public Commitment
- ☐ Training in fan-centric Climate Action
- ☐ Establishment of fan liaison or focal point within the Sustainability Team
- ☐ Other (Please Specify)

Outcomes:

Briefly describe the outcomes or changes within your organisation because of these activities.

Section 3 - Public Commitment:

Link to Public Commitment:

Provide a URL or reference to where your public commitment to fan-centred climate action can be accessed.

Section 4 – Stakeholder Engagement:

Stakeholders Engaged:

Select the key stakeholders your organisation engaged with during the foundational phase.

- ☐ Local Environmental Groups

- ☐ NGOs
- ☐ Government Bodies (Local or National)
- ☐ Academic Institutions
- ☐ Industry Partners
- ☐ Local Community Organisations
- ☐ Other (Please Specify)]

Nature of Engagement:

- ☐ Partnership Agreements
- ☐ Joint Initiatives
- ☐ Consultations
- ☐ Advisory Roles
- ☐ Resource Sharing
- ☐ Other (Please Specify)]

Briefly describe the nature of the engagement with these stakeholders and any outcomes or collaborations that emerged.